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ABSTRACT

Literature emerged at the beginning of this decade indicating that girls' and boys' differential experiences in schools frequently marginalized the girls and had negative impacts on their futures. This paper presents findings of a study conducted in a New York City independent day school to explore whether and how student attitudes and beliefs differed by gender. The students came predominantly from middle- and upper-middle-class families of European descent. Data were obtained from a survey of 362 students (192 males and 170 females) in grades 4-12. Students were asked about their favorite subjects, class participation, how they spent their free time, work habits, how they reacted to criticism and compliments, their use of computers, and adjectives that most described them. The most disturbing finding was that both boys and girls reported that girls were held to lower standards in meeting some of their school responsibilities. The ways in which males and females saw their world, however, was more similar than different. Girls said that they wanted to participate in classrooms more often; both genders cited fear of being wrong as the reason for not participating. Females most frequently identified themselves as creative, caring, intelligent, polite, honest, and hardworking. Males most often identified themselves as athletic, humorous, creative, intelligent, polite, honest, and curious. (Contains eight references.) (LMI)

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A Gender Study of Private School Students' Attitudes and Beliefs about School Life.

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Paper presented as part of Division B at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, April 8-12, 1996, New York, NY.

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A Gender Study of Private School Students' Attitudes and Beliefs about School Life.

Janice Koch

Introduction

This paper explores a study conducted at a New York City independent day school in response to the literature that emerged at the beginning of this decade that indicated that girls and boys had differential experiences in school that frequently marginalized the girls and negatively impacted their futures. In response to the nationwide discourse highlighted in the AAUW Report *How Schools Shortchange Girls: A Study of Major Findings on Girls and Education* (1992) and the Sadkers' book (1994) *Failing at Fairness: How America's Schools Cheat Girls*, the school appointed a faculty study group to examine the data and develop an action plan to familiarize faculty with the dominant features of these data. The school hosted visits by gender equity researchers and sent selected faculty from the gender equity study group to a two day conference that was devoted exclusively to the study of gender and schooling. After intensive study of gender issues and schooling, the committee undertook a study of the student population in order to discover to what extent the life at their school mirrors the lives of girls and boys described by the research.

As a result of their efforts, they developed an open ended survey instrument in order to learn more about student attitudes and beliefs about in-school and out-of-school activities and interests. The members of the faculty committe wondered what, if any, differences would emerge as the data were analyzed by gender. The author of this study collaborated on the survey instrument and made modifications that were mutually agreed upon. The resulting instrument contained thirty-nine questions, fourteen of which invited narrative responses. While the school administrators made it clear that the students would be providing valuable information about their

lives at school, there was no indication to the students that the results of the survey would be analyzed by gender. Three hundred and sixty-two students, 192 males and 170 females, in grades 4-12, were given the same full class period to complete the survey. Surveys were distributed and completed in the first hour of the school day and students responded in their homeroom classes. All surveys were completed on the same day of school; avoiding discussion about the survey before it was administered.

This study explores several areas of research for teacher educators:

(1) What does it look like when a grass roots teacher movement arises to explore the issue of gender equity in the school environment?

(2) What can be learned from a teacher generated student survey about the gendered lives of independent school students in grades four through twelve?

(3) How are the results of these data most effectively communicated and acted upon?

(4) What are the implications, suggested by these data, for changing the school environment ?

The Process

For a period of two years, a school committee, consisting of teachers and administrators, K-12, reviewed the literature on gender equity and invited speakers to address the faculty and parents about the research issues underlying gender and schooling. Members of this school committeee attended a conference solely concerning issues of gender and schooling and reported back to the entire committee upon their return. It should be noted that this independent school consists of largely middle and upper middle class students whose backgrounds are predominantly European-American. There is an important effort to diversify the student body and this effort has resulted in an increase of students of color, however, the school is located in and attracts students from a largely professional, mostly white, and notably intellectual community in New York City. Since most of the data on the experience of girls and boys in schools are informed by a similar population, the faculty committee took these data quite seriously as they prepared their student

survey instrument.

The data that informed their instrument was the recognition that girls and boys sitting in the same classrooms, with the same teacher, using the same textbook have differential learning experiences (AAUW, 1992; Sadker and Sadker, 1994, AAUW, 1995). The major findings from the research were summarized by the committee as follows:

• Boys take up much more teacher time at all grade levels, whether for academic or disciplinary purposes. Elementary school teachers tend to engage boys more actively in classroom discourse, frequently as a classroom management technique.

•Boys enter kindergarten with fewer social skills than girls and require more teacher time being socialized into the rules and routines of classroom life (Greenberg, 1985). Girls frequently experience early childhood education as more of the same socialization rules that they have been raised with.

•Some researchers maintain that, by third grade, many girls suffer from overcontrol (Harvard Education Newsletter, 1989), a condition where the girls have internalized the need to be compliant, passive and quiet. Consequently, girls frequently keep silent when they do not understand the material because they do not want to disturb the teacher or the class. Conversely, boys act out and express confusion in overt ways that gain teacher attention.

•Teachers clearly call on boys more frequently than girls, coach boys for correct answers, ask boys higher order questions, and in general, have greater expectations for boys' achievements, especially in science and mathematics.

•Inequities in classroom learning environments are exaggerated during elementary school science activities and middle and high school science classes (Kahle and Meece,1994). Science has been viewed as a male domain and has traditionally been identified with white male ways of seeing the world.

•Science is presented in schools as objective, value-free and politically neutral. Boys and young men are traditionally seen as the arbiters of these attributes.

•Girls receive praise for their appearance and the appearance of their work; boys more frequently receive praise for the content of their work and their abilities to solve problems.

•Teachers often do science experiments for the girls while coaching boys to do it for themselves. Girls are encouraged to be neat and tidy ladies, while boys are encouraged to be messy explorers (Koch, 1992).

These beliefs informed the development of the student survey instrument. After a preliminary survey was developed, I was called in to review the survey and offer suggestions. It was my understanding that this gender committee put a tremendous amount of time and effort into the instrument and were very interested in learning about the ways their students' lives at school and outside of school were influenced by gender socialization. I conceptualized my role as a guide who offered suggestions and little more. Consequently the instrument remained largely as it was originally developed with the major exception being the "other comments" options at the end of many of the more closed, check-off, type questions.

What follows is a detailed reporting of the survey questions and the results of the survey, analyzed by gender. While these are important data, the entire process is still under way at this school, where the faculty have explored the results of the student surveys and have now chosen to survey the students in kindergarten through grade three. At this time, the results of the survey have been reportred to the faculty in a half day session that I conducted with all the teachers and administrators in kindergarten through twelfth grades. The next step is an exploration of how, if at all, the faculty and administrators changed policies, practices and behaviors as a result of the conclusions drawn from these data.

The Survey

STUDENT ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS ABOUT IN-SCHOOL AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND INTERESTS ANALYZED BY GENDER.

PART ONE: THE MALE STUDENTS: n=192

Question	Response	Percentage
1. My 2 favorite subjects:	PE	46
	Math	35.4
	History	29
	English	24
	Arts	23
	Science	23
	Languages	11
	Other	6
2. I am very good at:	Sports	62.5
	Math	53
	Reading	39.5
	Writing	39
	Science	35
	Drawing/painting	35
	Performing	27
	Other	13.5
3. Would like to be better at:	Writing	53
	Drawing/painting	37
	Math	33
	Reading	32
	Science	29
	Performing	26.5
	Sports	25.5
	Other	3.6

4. Person I most admire: While nearly one third of all rsponses were Dad, Mom, or other family members, another one third of all responses mentioned a notable sports figure: multiple responses were for Michael Jordan and Patrick Ewing. Significant among the responses were that the only females were "Mom" or "Sister" and one response for Newt Gingrich's mother and one response for Cindy Crawford! Other assorted responses included famous

actors: Arnold Schwarteneger, Jean Claude Van Damme, Howard Stern, Bruce Lee, and Bruce Willis. There was one response each for: Martin Luther King Jr, Abraham Lincoln, Albert Einstein and the President. Interesting to note is that five males cited "myself" as the person I most admire.

	Response	Percentage
5. I like to read:	Magazines	66
	Novels	53
	Comics	42
	Newspapers	32
	Non-fiction	27
	Biographies	20
	Other*	18
	Poetry	12.5

*Other: includes science fiction, mysteries, sports books, and horror stories.

6. I participate in class discussions:	Often	57
	Sometimes	38
	Infrequently	5

7. I would like to participate in class discussions:

Often	68
Sometimes	27
Infrequently	4

8. When I do not participate in class discussions, it is because I am:

Afraid to be wrong	32.5
Other*	30
Unprepared	28
Shy	16
Reluctant	13

Other comments included: I don't want to, I'm tired, I'm lazy, and I'm not interested. One student said that he never "not participates."

9. When I raise my hand in class, I am called on:

Sometimes	58
Often	30
Infrequently	7

10. I call out answers in class discussion before I am called on:

Infrequently	44.3
Sometimes	42.2
Often	13.5

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11. How I feel about being called on when I don't raise my hand:

The dominant feeling is that the boys are annoyed, embarassed and do not like being called upon when they do not raise their hand. A frequent response blamed the teacher for this behavior by citing the teacher as mean, insensitive and wanting to "nail" or "embarass" you. They admonish teachers by saying they should be more considerate, mind their own business, and that the student feels like the "teacher hates me." Some boys indicated that they like it because it makes them feel challenged; they like being caught by surprise; they think they are smart because the teacher "knows I know."

12. This is how I feel about class participation:

More than half of the boys used the terms "good, great, important, happy, and fun" about class participation. There was an overwhelming sense that they enjoy participating; expression like "it's great", "it feels good", "it's cool," and "it's important" and "the more the better" are prevalent. One student said, it was "the best part of school." Others said it was fine or OK . A small group of students said that they did not like it and felt nervous about participating.

13. I spend my free time doing:

Half of the boys spend their time doing sports- basketball and soccer are the most popular. A large number indicated that they play video games, engage in computer activities or just "computers." Some indicate "hanging out" while others responded with reading books, studying, writing and listening to music. Several students indicated watching TV and a few students indicated drawing. Other responses included sleeping, socializing, guitar, while only one student indicated playing with friends and one student indicated talking on the phone.

14. I am interested in becoming:

While many of the males said they didn't know yet, there was a strong response for professional sports: Basketball, football, soccer and hockey players as well as sportscasters. An equal number wanted to become lawyers or doctors of some sort (i.e. surgeon, doctor, sports doctor, cardiologist). There were a number of males who indicated becoming an artist or writer. A few indicated a scientist, an architect and two male students indicated teacher. There were several students who indicated a position with computers- programmer, technician, designer, analyst, expert. There were other fields mentioned: rock climber, economist, investment analyst, singer, drummer, therapist, journalist, real estate agent, leader of a nation, archeologist, accountant, chef, photographer and Navy Seal.

15. I do well in school work because of my:

Ability	59%
Effort	48.4
Teachers	23.4
Behavior	17.2
Luck	15.1
Other*	7.3

*Other includes photographic memeory, parents, participation, self confidence, interest, cunning.

16. When I don't do well in a subject, it is because:

The majority of males attributed poor performance in a subject to not enough effort, not applying themselves, not putting enough time into their work, not understanding the material and not being interested in the subject. Ten percent of the males attributed poor performance to bad teachers or teaching and eight students cited "bad behavior."

Response	Percentage
17. If I have trouble with school work, it is mostly because of:	
Effort	43.2
Ability	24
Teachers	22
Other	22
Behavior	11.5
Luck	7.2
18. I think it is important to follow the rules:	
Usually	53.6
Always	26
Sometimes	16.7
Seldom	4.2
19. I care about the opinions of others:	
Usually	48.4
Sometimes	27.1
Always	19.8
Seldom	4.2
20. I prefer to do school work:	
Alone	41
In a group	24.5
With one partner	49
21. When I disagree with somebody, I usually:	
Compromise	57
Convince others	34
Other*	12.5
Give in	9.9

*Other includes: argue, yell at them, stand ground, talk it out, yell at them, hit them, walk away, ignore it.

Response	Percentage
22. When I disagree with somebody, I wish I would:	
Convince others	43.2
Compromise	39.1
Other*	12
Give in	5

*Other includes: shut-up, hurt them, argue, punish them, overpower, talk it out, say what I think, keep fighting, do what I wish.

23. When I am criticized I usually:

Feel angry	42.2
Am inspired to change	25.6
Other*	24
Feel sad	17.2
Am embarassed	16.7

*Other includes: don't care (half), take it, think it's funny, support myself, mixed feelings, criticize back, ignore it, feel left out, stop talking, laugh, feel nothing.

24. When I am complimented I usually:

Feel proud	74.5
Am embarassed	16.1
Am suspicious	11.5
Other	5

25. I am most often complimented on my:

Intelligence	49
Sports ability	44
Artistic ability	34
Behavior	24
Writing	23
Appearance	20
Neatness	17

26. I am most often criticized about my:

Sloppy work	39
Writing	29
Behavior	27
Sports	15
Appearance	13
Intelligence	10
Artistic ability	9

27. I think my teachers see me as:

Intelligent	62.5
Average	38.5
Slow	2

28. I am most often complimented by my:

Parents	63.5
Friends	39.5
Teachers	36.4
Bros/Sisters	11.4
Other*	8

*Other includes: grandparents, relatives, self, no one and most people.

29. I am most often criticized by my:

Friends	39
Parents	37
Bros/Sisters	26.5
Teachers	23.4
Other*	8.8

*Other includes: other students, jealous friends, enemies, self and no one.

30. When my academic achievements are recognized I feel:

Proud	83
Embarassed	8.8
Undeserving	6
Other	4

31. On which afterschool activity do you spend the most time during an average week?

Homework	40
Socializing with friends	39
Doing athletic activities	37.5
Watching television	21
Playing Computer games	16
Reading for pleasure	10.4

32. On which afterschool activity do you spend the least time during an average week?

Reading for pleasure	44
Playing computer games	26.5
Watching television	22
Doing athletic activities	16
Socializing with friends	16
Homework	13

33. I most value the opinions of:

Parents	50.5
Peers	47
Teachers	37.5
Bros/Sisters	11
Other	7

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34. In my family I am:

Oldest	38
Youngest	29
Middle	14.5
Only	18.5

35. I have a computer at home:

Yes	91
No	9

36. When it comes to using the computer I am:

Very skilled	44
Average	47
Unskilled	9

37. I use the computer the most for:

Homework	60
Games	51
Writing	34
Bulletin bd and mail	11

38. Check all the adjectives that describe you:

The adjectives that the males used most frequently as descriptors are:
ATHLETIC (73%)
HUMOROUS (71%)
CREATIVE (70%)
INTELLIGENT (68%)
POLITE (61%)
HONEST (61%)
CURIOUS (60%)

The least frequently selected adjectives were: understood, assertive and outspoken. It is a most interesting self-description and it certainly makes sense that such a "polite" group would not self-descrbe as assertive or outspoken.

39. How do you think you would be treated differently in school if you were of the opposite sex?

•The boys in grades 4-8 most frequently said "I don't know" or "no comment" or simply, "the same." When comments were offered, they suggested that they would be treated nicer, with more respect and not picked on as much for bad behavior. They also said that they would not be as good in sports and would have to pay more attention to their appearance. There is an overwhelming belief that "girls get away with much more" because teachers are kinder to girls.

What is interesting here is that the boys see this as external to themselves and not relevant to their own behavior; hence, they don't say, I would behave differently and, therefore, I would be "picked on" less.

•The older boys are more expressive on this issue and yet, clearly more than half of them indicated that they would be treated the same. Those who suggested otherwise indicated that if they were a girl, they would be "hit on" more and harassed more. They also suggested that if you were an unattractive girl, your life would be worse than if you were attractive. There is also a clear feeling that girls get "easier' and kinder treatment, especially in gym. They also suggest that girls are quiet and boys participate more in class; hence, for those boys who view participation as a burden, they see the girls as having an easier time in class.

•There were many blank pages and many "no comments." This could be due to the fact that it was the last page of the survey and they were tired of writing. As well, one boy indicated that this was last year's "write-in" and he wasn't doing it again! Several comments suggested that they would not spend as much time in or be as good in sports actvities. Clearly, the boys love athletics and frequently feel defined by it.

•The boys do see the girls as being favored by the teachers and as having an easier time getting good grades. They also see them as having pressure to emphasize their appearance and do not see that as desirable. At the older grades, they are aware of the attractive girls being seen as sex objects and the unattractive girls being seen as "dogs."

•Several boys, in all grade levels, indicated that their school was fair and that members of both sexes received equal treatment.

PART TWO: THE FEMALE STUDENTS: n = 170

Question	Response	Percentage
1. My 2 favorite subjects:	Arts	46.5
	English	31.2
	Math	30.6
	History	27.1
	PE	18.8
	Science	17.6
	Languages	15.3
	Other	12.9
2. I am very good at:	Writing	57.1
	Reading	55.3
	Math	48.2
	Drawing/painting	45.3
	Performing	45.3
	Sports	36.5
	Science	28.2
	Other	8.2

3. Would like to be better at:	Writing	40.1
	Science	38.2
	Math	36.5
	Sports	35.9
	Drawing/painting	32.9
	Performing	21.2
	Reading	19.4
	Other	10.6

4. Person I most admire: Close to 40 percent of the females chose a member of their family, with "mom" dominantly the choice. Only 2 females cited sports figures: Troy Aikman and Dominique Dawes(gymnast). Ten students cited "friend" or "friend" and the remainder of the responses included actors and actresses, authors and 5 chose Martin Luther King Jr. Of the celebrities, only 6 were male, the rest were female. One female cited "wonderwoman" and one cited Helen Keller. Authors included Maya Angelou, Charlotte Bronte, Marguerite Henry, and Anne Rice.

	Response	Percentage
5. I like to read:	Novels	69.4
	Magazines	56.5
	Non-fiction	35.3
	Other*	34.1
	Poetry	32.9
	Biographies	27.6
	Comics	18.2
	Newspapers	15.3

*Other: includes science fiction, mysteries, short stories, horror stories, historical fiction, and romance novels.

6. I participate in class discussions:	Often	51
	Sometimes	35
	Infrequently	14

7. I would like to participate in class discussions:

Often	73
Sometimes	19
Infrequently	8

8. When I do not participate in class discussions, it is because I am:

Afraid to be wrong	47
Other*	22
Unprepared	21

Shy	20
Reluctant	14

Other comments included: Bored, nothing to say, don't understand, tired, not interested, no one wants to hear it, don't know and not enough time to think.

9. When I raise my hand in class, I am called on:

Sometimes	56
Often	33
Infrequently	6

10. I call out answers in class discussion before I am called on:

Infrequently	59
Sometimes	30
Often	3

11. How I feel about being called on when I don't raise my hand:

The dominant feeling among the girls is that they feel scared, nervous, anxious, afraid, uncomfortable and embarassed . Many report that they hate it and think it is unfair; that it puts them on the spot and they feel angy, annoyed or frustrated. These responses account for a majority of the responses. A few females indicated that they don't mind or it's ok. The responses were strong and the pervasive feeling was negative !

12. How I feel about class participation:

The females report that they feel good about participating- obviously on their own terms. They express the belief that it is important, that it makes class interesting, and that it feeld good to participate. They indicated that ir hurts your grade if you don't participate and that it is essential to learning. The prevalent feeling is that everyone should have a voice and be involved.

13. I spend my free time doing:

The females indicated most frequently that they spend their free time reading, writing, drawing or doing homework . Hanging out with friends and talking on the phone were the next most frequent uses of free time. There were several indications of dancing and listening to music. Intersting to note is that less than 20% of the females indicated "sports", approximately the same percentage indicated "TV". Clearly the majority of activities indicated suggest that many of the females lead a sedentary life in their free time.

14. I am interested in becoming:

The females indicated an eclectic array of careers, with one particular profession not dominating over the others. Their choices included: dancer, scientist, math professor, lawyer, architect, doctor, archeologist, astronaut, poet, writer, designer (graphic and interior), photographer, teacher and President. More frequent choices were for some type of doctor, scientist, teacher, or writer. There were only two responses for professional sports. It is interesting to note the prevalence of scientists: marine biologists, chemist, zoologist, animal behaviorist. Sixteen girls selected " teacher."

15. I do well in a subject because off my:

Response	Percentage
Effort	69.4
Ability	63.5
Behavior	36
Teachers	32.4
Other*	10.6
Luck	3.5

*Other includes: dedication, organization, determination, preparation, motivation, interest, memory, attitude, parents.

16. When I don't do well in a subject, it is because:

Females report: not enough time to study, not trying my best, not concentrating, not trying hard enough, poor study habits, and lack of interest in the subject (i.e. boring, don't like the subject, not paying attention). A significant number of responses indicated "don't understand the material" or "too difficult for me." Six percent of the females indicated poor teacher or teaching or didn't like the teacher. There were no indications of bad behavior.

17. If I have trouble with school work, it is mostly because of:

Effort	29.4
Teachers	29.4
Other*	27
Ability	20.6
Behavior	3.5
Luck	3

*Other includes: don't understand, not paying attention, not interested, not asking questions, teacher not clear, too much work, work too difficult.

18. I think it is important to follow rules:

Usually	47.6
Always	35.3
Sometimes	12.9
Seldom	2

19. I care about the opinions of others:

Usually	49.4
Always	27.6
Sometimes	13.5
Seldom	23.5

20. I prefer to do school work:

Alone	53
With one partner	46
In a group	22.3

21. When I disagree with somebody, I usually:

Compromise	56.5
Convince others	27.6
Other*	20.6
Give in	11.2

*Other includes: argue, discuss, lose interest, walk away, explain how I feel, keep my opinion, voice my opinion, don't disagree.

22. When I disagree with somebody, I wish I would:

Response	Percentage
Compromise	46.5
Convince others	36
Other*	9.4
Give in	5

*Other includes: do what I want, not get upset, be able to hear others' opinions, tune out, always win, be clearer, discuss, drop it.

23. When I am criticized I usually:

Feel angry	42.4
Am inspired to change	32.4
Am embarassed	24.1
Feel sad	24.1
Other*	23.5

*Other includes: don't care, criticize back, accept and assess, ignore, depends on context, laugh it off, just listen, appreciate suggestion.

24. When I am complimented I usually:

Feel proud	69
Am embarassed	24
Am suspicious	11
Other	9*

*Other includes: appreciate it, say thank you, compliment person back, am flattered, feel happy, don't care.

25. I am most often complimented on my:

Intelligence	46.4
Artistic ability	43
Writing	35
Appearance	33.5

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Behavior	33
Sportsability	31.2
Neatness	27.6

26. I am most often criticized about my:

Sports	23
Sloppy work	22
Writing	21
Behavior	16
Appearance	14
Artistic ability	9
Intelligence	9

27. I think my teachers see me as:

Intelligent	62.9
Average	42.9
Slow	5.9

28. I am most often complimented by my:

Parents	69
Friends	58
Teachers	35
Bros/Sisters	13
Other*	11

*Other includes: relatives, friends of the family, older people, self, boyfriend, boss/employees.

29. I am most often criticized by my:

Bros/Sisters	37
Parents	35
Friends	25
Teachers	17
Other*	12

*Other includes: peers, boys, enemies, self and no one.

30. When my academic achievements are recognized I feel:

Proud	85
Embarassed	11
Other*	11
Undeserving	3

*Other includes: good, bad, want to celebrate, happy, continue to improve, will end soon.

31. On which afterschool activity do you spend the most time during an average week?

Homework	55
Socializing with friends	44
Doing athletic activities	26.5
Reading for pleasure	26
Watching television	19
Playing Computer games	8
Other	2

32. On which afterschool activity do you spend the least time during an average week?

Playing computer games	51
Reading for pleasure	26
Watching television	26
Doing athletic activities	26
Socializing with friends	6.5
Homework	5

33. I most value the opinions of:

Parents	46
Peers	43
Teachers	35
Other*	11
Bros/Sisters	9

*Other includes: myself, relatives, everyone.

34. In my family I am:

Youngest	36
Oldest	34
Only	21
Middle	8

35. I have a computer at home:

Yes	86
No	12

36. When it comes to using the computer I am:

Very skilled	23
Average	73
Unskilled	6.5

37. I use the computer the most for:

Homework	52.4
Games	44
Writing	40
Bulletin bd and mail	2.4

38. Check all the adjectives that describe you:

The adjectives that females used most frequently as descriptors are:
CREATIVE (82%)
CARING (77%)
INTELLIGENT (76%)
POLITE (75 %)
HONEST (75%)
HARD WORKING (74%)
CONSIDERATE (70%)
HUMOROUS (63.5%)

The least frequently selected adjectives were sloppy, powerful, lucky, scientific, outspoken and assertive. It is interesting to note that the females see themselves as creative first, then caring and then intelligent. As well, they do not attribute these qualities to luck; this is a hardworking group of girls and young women and they ascribe socially acceptable qualities to themselves. They are also not afraid to self describe as "intelligent" or "humorous," terms usually associated primarily with males in a coed institution.

39. How do you think you would be treated differently in school if you were of the opposite sex?

•The overwhelming majority of girls in grades 4-8 indicated "I don't know" or "probably the same." Several girls indicated that the teachers do not treat girls and boys differently.

•The ones who responded were quite specific and common themes ran through their answers. Those girls who were interested in athletics expressed that their athletic talent would be taken more seriously. They complained about not being taken seriously in gym and about getting shortchanged as females on the volleyball team. More generally, the girls felt that, as boys, they would be treated poorly by the teachers. They said that girls get away with a lot more in terms of work requirements and bad behavior. Some girls indicated that, as boys, they would have to learn to be loud and obnoxious and that, as boys, they would be under more pressure to conform to this rowdy behavior. One student expressed that boys had a great deal of peer pressure. One student said that boys were looked upon as wimpy when they complained about a poor grade to a teacher and that girls had more opportunities to re-take tests and make up assignments.

•The pervasive feeling is that girls receive kinder treatment from the teachers and are not treated so roughly. Most teachers, the girls expressed, think that boys are always misbehaving and rude. They feel it would be difficult to be a boy and not have that label placed on them. They also saw more pressure to be athletic and less pressure for their appearance.

•One upper school female said that people would be more impressed with her outspokenness and less likely to call her a bitch. Another upper school female said that people would be less surprised at her intelligence. A ninth grade girl remarked that she wouldn't have to

prove her intelligence; as a boy she would be thought of as smart until proven otherwise. Some students, accross grades, said that they would be called on more, but this was not a prevalent response. Another upper school girl said she would be touched less often. Several lower school girls said they would get in more trouble.

•The girls stated frequently that they would not get off as easy. There were also several females (grades 8-12) who said that they would be more respected if they were male and it would be easier to be outspoken.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

The overall picture:

This school student survey yields a great deal of information about the students. Students anonymously expressed their likes, dislikes, interests, attitudes and favorite pasttimes. They expressed personal feelings and many were quite self-reflective in their responses to the open ended questions. My overall experience of the students' responses leads me to describe the students in grades four through twelve as responsible and committed youngsters who appeared to take this survey task reasonably seriously and appeared to have been honest and thoughtful.

The ways in which the females and males see their world at school is actually more similar than different. Both sexes agree that the females are treated in a gentler, kinder fashion and this has been interpreted by many students to mean "girls get off easy." As well, there is a genuine feeling that the males receive a tremendous amount of admonition and disciplining and there does not appear to be an understanding of why this is so. I do not get the sense that the males see themselves as responsible for provoking teachers' negative sanctions. I also perceive that both males and females experience the "rowdy, outspoken, loud" boys as the way things are. The end result is that boys take up a lot of time and space in the classroom; they are punished, reprimanded and get in trouble often. This is a condition that needs addressing and is very consistent with the literature (Sadker, 1994; AAUW, 1992) that suggests that teacher time is disproportionately spent interacting with boys. A serious by-product of these perceptions is that girls see themselves as being treated in a more lenient, softer way by teachers. This becomes a problem when females perceive themselves as being capable of "winning over" the teachers by virtue of their "femaleness." This leads to a sense of "learned helplessness" (Fenema and leder, 1990) because the inference is that girls cannot be expected to meet rigid standards, so these standards can be relaxed for the females. In fact, perhaps the way females are treated with respect to their due dates on assignments and the consideration given them for re-taking a test and other classroom responsibilities, may be seen as a "norm" and not as "getting off easy." The larger picture,

therefore, infers that perhaps equalizing standards for all students means finding a comfortable place between what is allowed for the girls and what is demanded of the boys. In summary, standards for classroom behavior and respons.bilities should be uniform and negotiated, ideally, between the teacher and all of the students. It is important to recognize that being "soft" on the girls posits them as differentially privileged based on their gender and leads to ill will toward the girls by the boys. It also promotes female behavior that seeks to "get around rules" rather than to fully comply with them. In short, being nicer to girls is not in their best interests. The damaging message that girls receive when given behavioral and academic privileges is that they are not as competent as their male peers and, therefore, need assistance to compete with their male peers. The reason that this phenomenon is referred to as learned helplessness is because it describes what happens when females consistently receive help for completing tasks and fulfilling responsibilities in ways that are not available to their male peers.

Looking at personal styles

Studying the responses of girls and boys reveals interesting personal choices and attributional styles along lines of gender. Looking at questions 1-3, boys rank PE and Math as their favorite subjects; girls rank Arts and English as their favorites, with Math a close third. Where PE ranks first for the boys, it ranks fifth for the girls and where Arts ranks first for the girls, it ranks fifth for the boys. Boys rank Sports and Math as subjects they are very good at, while girls rank Writing and reading as subjects they are very good at. Question 3 provides interesting insights. Boys want to improve in the areas of writing and drawing and painting; these are two areas that they ranked 4th and 6th in question 2. This seems like a realistic desire based on what they said they were very good at. Girls, on the other hand, said they were very good at writing and, yet, they ranked writing first in the areas they would like to improve. Their second choice, science, seems more realistic, since they ranked science 7th in areas they were very good at. The inference is that, while girls express being very good at writing, they still want to be better at it. Boys own their abilities to be very good in an area and want to improve in areas they don not see themselves as very good at.

The person I most admire question (#4) shows sharp divisions between the sexes. The boys predominantly mentioned a sports figure, when they did not indicate a family member. Girls, on the other hand, cited celebrities outside of the sports professions. The girls' responses to this question were more varied and included women writers. The boys barely mentioned women in

their list of the people they most admire. This affirms the centrality of sports to the boys at .

In response to their reading habits, comics were ranked third by the boys and 7th by the girls. Both groups like magazines and novels, however the girls preferred non-fiction over the boys while the boys preferred newspapers over the girls. There are indications that an interest in sports leads boys to the newspapers for the latest scores and commentaries.

Questions 5-12: Class participation: Both males and females participate in class often and sometimes to similar extents. Females had 10 percent higher responses for those who said they participated infrequently. This is very consistent with the literature, however, at this school, only 14 percent of the females cited "infrequently" as their class participation choice. Both males and females expressed a desire to participate more often, with females' responses to #7 increasing by 22 percent as compared to 11percent increase for the boys. Girls clearly want to particpate more often in class. More girls than boys said they they didn't participate because they were afraid to be wrong, however both sexes ranked this as their primary reason. Girls ranked unprepared, "shy and reluctant to show how much I know" in the same order as did the boys, however 4 percent more girls than boys said they were shy. Seven percent more boys than girls said they were unprepared.

Boys call out answers significantly more frequently than girls. This is the conventional stereotype and not at all unusual. Boys tend to have more license to public sphere voice. In response to how the students feel about being called on when they don't raise their hand (#11), the boys expressed being annoyed or embarassed, while the girls expressed anxiety, fear and feelings of nervousness. Both sexes are uncomfortable with this practice and think it is unfair. More males than females believe the teacher is out to get you. This is consistent with the fact that the males at Berkeley Carroll are more defensive about their treatment by the teachers.

The boys actively express pleasure in participating in class (#12). While the girls think it's good, they don't seem to enjoy it as much. The girls feel that participation is important and good for you- the boys love it! This is an interesting difference and could be due to the fact that boys frequently feel more entitlement to public sphere voice. It becomes, in fact, their way of "performing." Girls are more likely to play a role, as in a play, when they perform.

How I spend my free time:

Free time is spent quite differently by males and females. Males report the centrality of

playing sports in their free time- notably basketball, hockey and soccer. They play video games and "hang out", but sports activities are the most popular. Females engage in more sedentary free time activity- reading, writing, drawing and painting are frequent activities. Girls are much more likely than boys to hang out with friends and talk on the phone. Girls are rarely engaged with sports during their free time.

What I want to be:

Career aspirations divide sharply along gender lines. Once again sports assume a central role in the males' lives. Many males aspire to be professional athletes or sports casters. An equal number aspire to be lawyers and doctors. Many indicated work with computers and few aspired to do scientific research. The females' choices were more varied, where one profession did not dominate another. Their choices included scientist, dancer, doctor, archeologist, writer, architect and there were several choices for teacher. Only two male students indicated "teacher." Of all the careers, the choice of teacher or professional sports divided sharply by gender.

Work habits: questions 15-17:

Boys attribute their success in school work first to ability and second to effort. Girls rank effort first and ability second. Notable is that neither sex credits succes to "luck." Boys attributed "luck" as a factor more frequently than girls. This is not consistent with the gender research literature which says that girls usually attribute their success to luck while boys attribute their success to ability. Clearly ability and effort rank high for both sexes at this school.

While both sexes attribute insufficient effort and not trying hard enough to poor grades, boys tend to blame teachers much more frequently than girls do when they are unsuccessful in a subject. Males also attribute bad behavior to poor grades. Girls more frequently say they do not understand the material and make no reference to behavior when discussing their performance in a subject.

Another departure from the gender equity literature shows up in question #17. When males have trouble with schoolwork they attribute it to effort first, then ability, then teachers. Girls attribute lack of success to effort, then teacher, then ability. Males and females stress effort over ability. Girls ranked "teachers" as the reason for having difficulty more prevalently than did boys. This is dissonant with the rest of the male responses and with the literature. The girls' attribution of poor performance to their teachers is an example of girls' externalization of their poor performance. This is an unusual result.

Following rules:

More females than males think it is important to follow the rules "always," while both sexes had the most prevalent response for "usually."

Opinions of others:

While both sexes care about the opinions of others "always and usually" in majority percentages, only 4 percent of males indicate that they seldom care about the opinions of others, while 23.5 percent of the females say they seldom care about the opinions of others. This would support the females' stated beliefs that the males in the school are subject to a great deal of peer pressure.

Working alone:

Both males and females like to work with one partner when doing school work. Their responses to this question were quite similar, but more females than males prefer to do school work alone. This dispels the myth of the highly social female who has to have a friend over all the time. This is an interesting response.

Disagreements:

Both males and females gave similar responses when asked what they do when they disagree with somebody (#21-22). More than half of the males and more than half of the females chose "compromise." Although more females than males reported that they would "give-in" the difference was not statistically significant. This is an unusual result, considering the "obnoxious" descriptors assigned to males by the females. Apparently all students prefer compromise.

Criticism and Compliments (#23-30):

Both males and females tend to feel angry when they are criticized. Females tend to feel embarassed and sad more often than males and males tend to laugh it off more often than females. The females' angry responses are more unusual, since females tend to feel embarassed and sad more often than angry at negative feedback.

When males and females are complimented, they had similar responses, with more females than males tending to be embarassed by the compliment. Both males and females report being most frequently complimented for their intelligence. Males report sports as their second choice, while females indicated their artistic ability as their second choice. This is a more typical gender division, with the boys identified by their sports prowess and girls by their artistic abilities.It is significant

that both males and females report being most frequently complimented on their intelligence. For the females, this is a very positive response and not consistent with the literature.

Females report being criticized most often for their sports abilities, while males are criticized most often for their sloppy work. This is consistent with the prior responses and divides typically by gender. What is surprising for the female results is that they report being criticized almost as frequently for their sloppy work. Females are usually prized for their neat work and it is unusual that the female students report frequent criticism for sloppiness. I am led to believe that their neatness standards are very high and perceptions of really neat work would differ greatly between the sexes.

Both males and females report similar percentages for how their teachers see them (#27). It is refreshing to see that females as well as males report that teachers see them as intelligent. This speaks to the success of the affective school environment. More females than males report being seen as slow, but over 60 percent of both sexes believe they are seen as intelligent by their teachers.

Both males and females are most often complimented by parents (#28). They both report their next choices as: friends, teachers, siblings and "other" in that descending order. This would dispel the belief that teachers are complimenting one sex over another.

Females more than males see themselves most often criticized by siblings (#29). Males report seeing themselves as most often criticized by friends, while females rank friends as third, after siblings and parents. This affirms the notion that boys are subjected to a lot of peer pressure at school.

Both males and females feel proud (over 80 percent) when their academic achievements are recognized (#30). Slightly more females than males feel embarassed when this happens.

Afterschool activities (#31-32):

Both males and females report spending the most time after school on homework. As expected, more males than females are doing athletic activities and more females than males are reading for pleasure. Only 5 percent more females than males are socializing with friends, but 8 percent more males than females are playing computer games.

Opinions that are valued (#33):

Both males and females most value the opinions of parents and peers, in that order. It is interesting to note that males report a 4 percent higher frequency of valuing the opinions of parents and peers .

Computers (#35-37):

86 percent of the females and 91 percent of the males have computers at home. This is unusual, since many more males than females usually have computers at home. Only 23 percent of the females, but 44 percent of the males see themselves as very skilled at using the computer. Most of the females describe their computer skills as average and 11 percent of the males see themselves as unskilled with computers as compared with 6.5 percent of the females. Both males and females use the computer most frequently for doing homework and then second, for computer games. Eleven percent of the males as compared to 2.4 percent of the females use the computer for electronic mail; this is consistent with the literature on gender and computers.

Adjectives that Describe You (#38)

This question shows clear gender divisions in responses. Females self identify most frequently (over 70 percent for each response) as creative, caring, intelligent, polite, honest and hardworking. Males self identify most frequently as athletic, humorous, creative, intelligent, polite, honest and curious. The adjectives least frequently selected for females were sloppy, powerful, lucky, scientific, outspoken and assertive. Those least frequently selected for males were understood, assertive and outspoken.

Here again, the males self identify first as athletic. Consistent with their choice of the arts as their favorite subject, females self identify first as creative. What is most interesting for the males is the low ranking "outspoken and assertive" received. While they report that teachers and peers see them this way and certainly many females see them this way, the males do not self identify as outspoken or assertive. It leads me to believe that the peer culture is very powerful for males at this school. As individual respondents, they do not indicate the rowdy, boisterous personna that they put forth at school. Their self designation as polite, intelligent and creative tends to conjure up a different image than that which they describe so frequently in the final brief essay (cited at the beginning of this section).

Once again, the females self identify as intelligent, with creative and caring taking the lead. Caring is the most gender identified adjective and it is not uncommon for females to self identify as caring. There are many who see this as an enormous strength in character and an attribute to be cultivated.

The second most frequent choice for males was "humorous." There is a lot of clout for males for being funny and clever; there is less clout for females in this arena; hence, it is interesting that 63.5 percent of the females self identify as humorous.

Implications for Further Study

The grade level remarks were evaluated with respect to the data analysis of the whole school population and with respect to the idiosyncratic nature of small numbers of students at each grade level. Significant trends in the experience of males and females at this school include:

(1) The role of sports and athletic activities in the life of boys and the amount of time all the males spend in sports related activities.

(2) The relative absence of the value of PE as the girls mature and the indications by high school girls that organized sports do not favor the girls' teams.

(3) The frequency with which both males and females self describe as intelligent.

(4) The role of the arts and the high place in which it is held by females at every grade level and by males, notably at grade seven.

(5) The attitudes of males towards teachers between grades eight and eleven: notably the negative feelings when they are called on without volunteering and when they are negatively sanctioned for being unprepared. This is consistent with males' tendencies to externalize failure.

(6) The role of writing in the life of the males: notably the high esteem in which it is held; certainly a departure from the literature.

(7) The importance, by omission, of the study of science. While neither negative nor positive comments about science abound, it is precisely this absence of comment that warrants attention.

(8) The feelings, especially by grades 9-11 males and females, as indicated by responses to the essay in question #39 that boys are held to tougher standards and that girls have it easier.

Clearly, the student surveys provide a wealth of data for faculty to ponder. It can only be helful to consider the specific nature of the students at each grade level, both for instructional purposes and for examination of the affective climate in the school. The issue of physical education in the life of the female students warrants some attention. What needs to be done to make PE more inviting and enhancing for the females as they mature? Similarly, what happens to the male student who is not athletically inclined? How can the school climate better meet his needs?

The arts influence a large number of students at this school. This includes drawing/painting and performing. Do we want to explore possibilities for males and the creative arts?

What role does organized sports for females play at the school? There appears to be a

desire that greater importance be assigned to female teams and organized sports for some females in the school.

The classroom climate promotes learning and students are hard working and engaged. Standards for performance and behavior need to be gender blind so that one gender does not feel differentially favored or maligned. This is as important for the males as it is for the females. It may be helpful to promote grade level faculty conversations about rules, standards, reports and the like.

The most number of females reported that writing was the subject they were very good at. They also indicated that "writing" was the subject they would most want to improve. The research supports the belief that girls (1) do not internalize their success in a subject and frequently feel they must keep on improving; and (2) females like to "play it safe" and not work on areas in which they are insecure. Both these trends can be addressed through teacher-student interactions that sanction specific aspects of the students' work and through school climate factors that highlight the achievements of young women.

Concluding Remarks

"Teachers need to resist providing easy answers as a reward for cooperation and encourage girls to work through difficult problems on their own" (AAUW, 1995, p.4).

Schools can only gain by inviting the articulation of students' views, attitudes, beliefs and values. This survey represents a great stride forward toward learning about the student body. There is a wealth of information here and what needs to be considered at this point is, what do we do with these data and how can we use the data to better meet the needs of our students?

In a recent study, the AAUW (1995) recommends that schools assess their programs and find out what is working for girls. Ask teachers and students to identify needs not being met by current programming (p.17). This report states plainly that "school initiativves that benefit girls will also benefit boys" (p.vii).

Clearly the most disturbing results of this survey indicate that girls are held to lower standards in meeting some of their school responsibilities. This flies in the face of the recommendation that schools ensure girls' participation and success by engaging them fully in their own learning, displaying confidence in their abilities, and offering girls equal access to opportunities for learning.

These data have the potential to influence school atmosphere and the climate in which the students make meaning of their world.The broader purpose of this study is to explore this grass

roots method of gathering data as a useful tool and to discuss the types of follow-up faculty development that is necessary to ensure that these data propel the gender agenda forward in this school. I believe that the process of presenting these data to faculty has already had important implications for some changes in school climate and the attempt to equalize the teaching and learning environment for males and females at this school continues.This school wide effort has raised the level of gender equity discourse among the faculty and revealed possibilities for classroom research to the individual teachers. What remains to be learned is the result of presenting these data with analysis and interpretation ot the entire student body.

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